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A coup for the KGB?

Agent's arrest raises questions on keeping track of the moles

The arrest of an agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation as an alleged Soviet spy is shocking enough. What must transform another one of those almost routine East-West incidents into a major concern about U.S. intelligence is this:

Richard Miller, the 20-year veteran FBI agent apprehended in the act of slipping documents to Soviet spies, was assigned to the FBI counterintelligence section.

Any KGB penetration of a western intelligence agency is a worrisome matter. However, when Soviet penetration is uncovered in counterintelligence, the entire intelligence edifice becomes suspect. To understand why such apprehension is in no way exaggerated needs an explanation as to the functions of counterintelligence.

The basis for CI can best be understood in terms of the Latin maxim, *quis custodiet ipsos custodes?* — who will police the police-men? CI functions are fourfold:

1. To protect our own intelligence operations from enemy penetration.
2. To seek out enemy deception and disinformation.
3. To uncover secret political operations directed against the United States and its allies.
4. To prevent spies and terrorists from enjoying any successes.

CI overseas operations are run by the Central Intelligence Agency, while CI domestic operations are directed by the FBI. It may have been a combination of the CI sections of both agencies that led to the belated arrest October 1981 of David H. Barnett, a former CIA agent, who confessed that he had for some 20 years been selling CIA secrets to the KGB. Barnett is now serving a jail sentence.

Before his arrest, Barnett had applied for a staff position on the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. With his qualifications, he might have been hired, had there been a staff vacancy at the time. Since the Senate Committee as well as its opposite number in the House are privy to secret CIA covert activities, penetration of either of those committees would have been another KGB coup. What was already a major coup was turning a CIA agent into a KGB informer who had revealed the identities of 30 covert CIA employees.

The objective of counterintelligence is to ensure that the other sections, say, of CIA — that is, those which run covert operations, clandestine collection, and analysis and estimates — are to be trusted. Thus if CI is penetrated, it can mean that there is no way of knowing whether the other divisions have been "turned around" and are being run by the KGB. For some years, British counterintelligence was in the hands of Kim Philby, the Soviet agent, with disastrous consequences for British intelligence.

Richard Helms, CIA director from 1966-1972, has said:

"Counterintelligence is terribly important, because without an effective counterintelligence program — both in the CIA and the FBI — the problem of double agents and infiltrators is insurmountable."

Over the last decade, U.S. intelligence agencies have been weakened, first, because of their own free-wheeling misbehavior and, second, because of understandable congressional investigations into this misbehavior. The late Sen. Frank Church, who chaired one of

the investigations, once said in a fit of exasperation, "I wonder if we are competent to manage an intelligence-gathering program on anything." In any case, the congressional probes and, later in-house CIA purges, particularly of the counterintelligence function, weakened U.S. intelligence to an alarming degree.

The question today is whether or not the CIA or FBI have an effective counterintelligence capability. In 1981, Newton S. Miller, former chief of operations in the CIA counterintelligence staff under the controversial James Angleton, told a conference of the Consortium for the Study of Intelligence that such a CI capability was then lacking. Neither the CIA nor the FBI, he said, was neutralizing Soviet and Soviet-bloc activity in the United States, the KGB's No. 1 target. Whether there has been any improvement in the situation since the Reagan administration took over is unknown to the writer.

However, what is known is that for some years after these congressional investigations and Justice Department actions restricting

intelligence activities, the training and recruiting of counterintelligence personnel was inadequate, according to Kenneth deGraffenreid, now on the National Security Council staff and earlier on the Senate Select Committee. Thus the apprehension, however admirable, of an FBI counterintelligence operative raises anew troubling questions about U.S. counterespionage capability and therefore of U.S. intelligence in toto.

To put it simply, the crisis of U.S. intelligence is a crisis of counterintelligence.

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